

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



Office of the Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Zoning Commission
FROM: *JLS for*
Ellen McCarthy, Director OP
DATE: March 3, 2006
SUBJECT: Zoning Commission Case No. 89-234C
Modification Request

94-01A

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APPLICATION

1331 L Street NW, L.P. (the applicant) has submitted a request for a minor modification to the Planned Unit Development case 89-234C. The modification relates only to the design of the building.

The applicant explains the history of the PUD and the final design details in pages 2 and 3 of the submitted statement.

RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning **recommends that the modification be setdown for public hearing.** The Office of Planning cannot recommend that the modification be considered "minor" because of the substantial change in style, design, materials and time since the 1991 approval. However, OP has no objection to the proposed design and supports its consideration by the Zoning Commission.

SITE AND AREA DESCRIPTION

The subject site is a mid-block lot in the 1300 block of L Street, NW. The adjoining lots are developed with building of varying height- 22 feet up to 128 feet. It is located immediately adjacent to the central business district just southeast of Thomas Circle, in Square 247. The square is bound by 14th Street, NW, to the west, 13th Street to the east, L Street to the south and Massachusetts Avenue to the north. The site is located along the southern half of the square, just south of Green Court.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case No. 94-01A
EXHIBIT NO. 8
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ZONING

The site was rezoned from HR/SP-2 to a consolidated PUD with related map amendment to C-4 in 1991. Parcels within the square facing 14th Street are also zoned C-4 as is square 248, directly across L Street to the south. The PUD was extended in 1997 by Order 684-C for an additional ten years with a noted expiration of December 30, 2010 (expiration at that time was December 1999).

For that extension request the applicant stressed “continued unfavorable economic conditions” and stated that they were “prepared to build the office building as soon as it is financially prudent to do so.” The Order noted that “[T]he Commission believes that an extension of time, as requested by the applicant is not unreasonable, that the rationale for granting approval of the PUD has not changed, and that no adverse consequences will result from approving the request.” A new owner is now willing to begin construction and build the office building and is requesting the Zoning Commission approve the modified design.

Condition 14 of the original Order 684 requires that prior to a building permit being issued the applicant must submit exterior materials samples to the Commission for final approval and that no additional public hearing need be held for the Commission to approve the materials. While materials have been submitted, the design has also been substantially modified. OP understands that the owners are eager to break ground but OP cannot conclude that such a major departure from the originally approved design should be considered minor.

However, OP supports the application and recommends that the Commission set the case down for hearing.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan Generalized Land Use Map identifies Square 247 for a mix of high-density residential and high-density commercial.

The proposal is not inconsistent with many elements of the Comprehensive Plan and specifically it is consistent with Chapter 9- Downtown Plan Elements.

Major themes within the Comprehensive Plan relevant to this development are:

- 1) Stabilizing and improving the District’s neighborhoods, and;
- 2) Preserving and Promoting Cultural and Natural Amenities
- 3) Respecting and improving the physical character of the district;
- 4) Increasing the Quantity and Quality of Employment Opportunities in the District
- 5) Promoting Enhanced Public Safety

Chapter 9, The Downtown Element of the Comprehensive Plan addresses the specific goals and policies for the downtown and private office space:

900.5 Demand for private office space in Downtown will increase as development in areas to the west is completed and market conditions improve. Office development will bring jobs and reinforce the regional importance of the Downtown. Office development Downtown shall be used to leverage the production of housing Downtown or affordable housing throughout the District of Columbia, including Downtown:

- (a) A general target of thirty-five million one hundred thousand square feet (35.1 million ft.²) of office space has been established, a significant increase from a base of thirteen million nine hundred thousand square feet (13.9 million ft.²). Office development Downtown shall be used to leverage the production of housing Downtown or affordable housing throughout the District of Columbia, including Downtown;
- (b) Because market forces tend to favor office development over other uses, office development must be directed to ensure that the land use targets for retail, hotel, residential, and arts and cultural space are met. Office development Downtown shall be used to leverage the production of housing Downtown or affordable housing throughout the District of Columbia, including Downtown; and
- (c) Offices should be located throughout Downtown, with concentrations around Franklin and Judiciary Squares and in Downtown East (bound by 3rd and North Capitol Streets, and by Constitution, Louisiana, and Massachusetts Avenues, N.W.). Office development Downtown shall be used to leverage the production of housing Downtown or affordable housing throughout the District of Columbia, including Downtown.

905 PRIVATE OFFICE LAND USE

905.1 The Downtown private office land use objective is to obtain major new office development in Downtown, consistent with other land use and design objectives.

905.2 The policies established in support of the Downtown private office land use objective are as follows:

- (a) Guide office space to appropriate locations including priority office areas, such as Franklin Square, Downtown East, and Judiciary Square;
- (b) Use office market forces as devices to obtain other critical land uses, such as retail, hotel, residential, and arts uses; and

- (c) Direct and apportion office development as necessary to obtain the desired mix of other land uses in mixed-use areas.

This PUD and the requested modification continue to be consistent with these Comprehensive Plan objectives by creating a new modern office building and enhancing the safety and appearance of the adjacent alleys and the businesses located in them by extending the retail window and lighting along the alleys.

The amenities of the PUD included a significant \$3,000,000 contribution to the Salvation Army PUD for off-site residential housing and \$500,000 contribution for housing within the ANC 2F. The applicant has stated in their submission that the 3 million dollars was presented to the Salvation Army in 1996 and the \$500,000 was invested in 20 Logan Circle for an 11-unit apartment building in 1997.

RECOMMENDATION

OP believes that the applicant intends to construct the office building, and although OP cannot conclude the design change is minor, OP recommends that the case be set down for public hearing.